

Claims

What is claimed is:

1. A system for facilitating volume pricing, comprising:
an offers and orders component that receives and aggregates orders for a product from a plurality of buyers; and
a logistics component that determines a shipping price for the product for a subset of the plurality of buyers, the shipping price being determined at least in part upon the subset of buyers sharing a shipping method.
2. The system of claim 1, further comprising a catalog component operable to manage a listing of a plurality of products.
3. The system of claim 1, further comprising a users and groups component operable to manage information of a plurality of users of the system.
4. The system of claim 1, further comprising an access control component operable to manage access to a plurality of features of the system.
5. The system of claim 1, further comprising a messaging component operable to manage communication between the system, other systems, and a plurality of users of the system.
6. The system of claim 1, further comprising a terms and conditions component operable to manage agreements between users of the system as to business terms and conditions.
7. The system of claim 1, further comprising a blanket pricing component operable to manage agreements between buyers and sellers as to product prices.

8. The system of claim 1, further comprising a product relationships component operable to manage relationships between at least one of a plurality of products and another of the plurality of products.

9. The system of claim 8, the relationship between at least one of the plurality of products and another of the plurality of products being a byproduct relationship.

10. The system of claim 8, the relationship between at least one of the plurality of products and another of the plurality of products being a product family relationship.

11. The system of claim 1, further comprising a RFQ/RFO/RFP component operable to manage quote, offer, and product requests for a plurality of products.

12. The system of claim 1, further comprising an invoicing component operable to manage system accounts.

13. The system of claim 1, further comprising an agents component operable to perform routine tasks and to provide decision support for the plurality of buyers and a plurality of sellers.

14. The system of claim 13, the agents component including a seller agent and a buyer agent.

15. The system of claim 14, the seller agent utilizing historical data to determine a pricing strategy for at least one of a plurality of products with respect to at least one of the plurality of buyers.

16. The system of claim 14, the seller agent operable to determine details that at least one of the plurality of sellers should include in an offer to achieve maximum profits.

17. The system of claim 14, the seller agent operable to determine a production schedule for at least one of the plurality of sellers.

18. The system of claim 14, the buyer agent utilizing historical data to assist at least one of the plurality of buyers in finding a best buy for at least one of a plurality of products.

19. The system of claim 14, the buyer agent operable to automatically create an order for at least one of a plurality of products for at least one of the plurality of buyers.

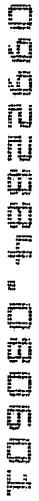
20. A method of costing, comprising:
electronically offering a product for sale;
receiving a first order for the product from a first set of buyers at a first price;
receiving a second order for the product from a second set of buyers at a second price;

calculating a total quantity of products ordered from the first set of buyers and the second set of buyers;

accepting to fill the first order at a third price, the third price being dependent upon the total quantity of products ordered; and

accepting to fill the second order at a fourth price, the fourth price being dependent upon the total quantity of products ordered.

21. The method of claim 20, the first price and the third price being selected from a first price schedule which varies as a function of total quantity of products ordered.

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22. The method of claim 21, the first price schedule being dependent upon a ranking of the first set of buyers.
 23. The method of claim 21, the first price schedule also varying as a function of time.
 24. The method of claim 20, the second price and the fourth price being selected from a second price schedule which varies as a function of total quantity of products ordered.
 25. The method of claim 24, the second price schedule being dependent upon a ranking of the second set of buyers
 26. The method of claim 24, the second price schedule also varying as a function of time.
 27. The method of claim 20, the product being electronically offered for sale over the Internet.
 28. The method of claim 20, a seller setting an open session period during which orders for the product offered for sale electronically are accepted by the seller.
 29. The method of claim 28, the seller setting a fixed minimum order quantity on the products offered for sale electronically.
 30. The method of claim 28, the seller setting a variable minimum order quantity on the products offered for sale electronically.
 31. The method of claim 20, the products offered for sale electronically including options for customization.

32. A computer readable medium storing computer executable instructions operable to perform the method of claim 20.

33. A method of costing, comprising:
electronically offering a product for sale;
receiving orders for the product from a plurality of buyers;
determining a final price for the product based upon a total quantity of products ordered from the plurality of buyers;
determining whether the final price is less than a contract price between a seller and at least one of the plurality of buyers; and
accepting to fill the orders for all of the plurality of buyers at the final price if the final price is less than the contract price, or accepting to fill the orders for the at least one of the plurality of buyers at the contract price and accepting to fill the orders for the other of the plurality of buyers at the final price if the final price is not less than the contract price.

34. The method of claim 33, the seller setting a fixed minimum order quantity on the products offered for sale electronically.

35. The method of claim 33, the seller setting a variable minimum order quantity on the products offered for sale electronically.

36. The method of claim 33, electronically offering a product for sale being limited to an open session period corresponding to a time during which orders to purchase the product are accepted.

37. The method of claim 33, the product electronically offered for sale including options for customization.

38. The method of claim 33, the product being electronically offered for sale over the Internet.

39. The method of claim 38, the product offered for sale being displayed to buyers entering a deal room on the Internet in which information related to current price of the product is displayed.

40. A computer readable medium storing computer executable instructions operable to perform the method of claim 33.

41. A method of costing, comprising:
electronically offering a product for sale;
receiving a first order for the product from a first set of buyers at a first price;
receiving a second order for the product from a second set of buyers at a second price;
determining a third price for the first set of buyers based upon a total quantity of products ordered;
determining a fourth price for the second set of buyers based upon the total quantity of products ordered;
determining whether the third price is less than a contract price between a seller and at least one of the first set of buyers; and
accepting to fill the orders at the third price for the first set of buyers and at the fourth price for the second set of buyers if the third price is less than the contract price, or accepting to fill the orders for at least one of the first set of buyers at the contract price, the other of the first set of buyers at the third price, and the second set of buyers at the fourth price if the third price is not less than the contract price.

42. A computer readable medium storing computer executable instructions operable to perform the method of claim 41.

43. A system for volume pricing, comprising:
a server configured to receive orders for a product from a plurality of different buyers via at least one remote computer system, the server comprising:

- a processor;
- a memory coupled to the processor, the memory storing a first price schedule and a second price schedule, the first price schedule operable to determine a first price for the product for at least one of the plurality of different buyers and the second price schedule operable to determine a second price for the product for the other plurality of different buyers; and
- a network interface coupled to the processor for transmitting and receiving data with at least one remote computer system.
44. The system of claim 43, the first and second price schedules varying in accordance with a total quantity of product ordered.
45. The system of claim 43, the first and second price schedule varying in accordance with time.
46. The server of claim 43, the server being configured to provide the plurality of different buyers access to view at least one of the first and second price schedules via one or more of the at least one remote computes.
47. The server of claim 43, the server being configured to limit a period during which orders for the product are accepted to an open session period.
48. A method of costing, comprising:
- electronically offering a product for sale in accordance with a price schedule, the price schedule setting a price for the product which varies in accordance with a quantity of the product ordered;
- receiving orders for the product from a plurality of different buyers;
- calculating a total quantity of products ordered from the plurality of different buyers;

determining a shipping price for the product based on at least one of the plurality of different buyers sharing a shipping method with at least another of the plurality of different buyers;

determining a final price for the product from the price schedule based on the total quantity of products ordered and the determined shipping price; and

accepting to fill the orders for the plurality of different buyers at the final price.

49. The method of claim 48, the shipping method being based upon truck filling based aggregation.

50. The method of claim 48, the shipping method being based upon area-based truck sharing.

51. The method of claim 48, the shipping method being based upon zip code based truck sharing.

52. The method of claim 48, the shipping method being based upon a custom truck route.

53. The method of claim 48, the product being electronically offered for sale over the Internet.

54. The method of claim 53, the product offered for sale being displayed to buyers entering a deal room on the Internet in which information related to current price of the product is displayed.

55. A computer readable medium storing computer executable instructions operable to perform the method of claim 48.

56. A data packet adapted to be transmitted between two or more computer processes, the data packet comprising:

- one or more first fields adapted to store at least one pricing structure for a product;
- one or more second fields adapted to store orders from a plurality of buyers for the product; and
- one or more third fields adapted to store a final price for the product based upon the total quantity of products ordered from the plurality of buyers or a Not To Exceed (NTE) contract price between the seller and at least one of the plurality of buyers.